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# Legacy

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## **LEGACY**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at  
Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

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## **Abstract**

### **Legacy**

By Susana Marta Almuiña

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at  
Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2009

Chair: Sonya Clark

Department of Craft and Material Studies

I am interested in family secrets and the rules and mores that may constrain family behavior or adversely affect a member's destiny. I make work that looks askance at the efforts to hide from the world those events or secrets that reflect badly on a family. I look at the places where I have discovered some of them: family furniture and objects around the house, which can shed, metaphorically, the secrets and stories that are part of family tradition. I focus light on the lives of my uncelebrated ancestors and bring them, however briefly, into the collective consciousness.

## 1. Introduction

*Nothing comes from nowhere, least of all art. Every body of work has its points of origin, its logic of personal urgency and cultural impetus, the coordinates of which are often found in an artist's childhood.*

Roberta Smith<sup>1</sup>

Social and domestic issues inspire me, in particular the rules and mores that may constrain family behavior or adversely affect a member's destiny. I make work that looks askance at the efforts to hide from the world those events or secrets that reflect badly on a family.

Rather than disclose the secrets, which are not mine to divulge, I look at the places where I have discovered some of them: family furniture and objects around the house that can shed, metaphorically, the secrets and stories that are part of family tradition.

I also look at one of the rituals of marriage and the trappings associated with marital success: the marriage proposal and all the heirlooms that are happily given up to give the newly married a good start in life.

Those objects of pride inspire me to such an extent that I have made a fetish of them. Large breakfronts, wardrobes, and cupboards stand as witnesses of family success in prolonging its contribution to humanity's gene pool.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Roberta, "Main Street Postcards as Muse," New York Times, February 6, 2009

*She is your treasure, she must have a husband;  
I must dance bare-foot on her wedding day,  
and, for your love to her, lead apes in hell.*

*William Shakespeare*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616). English poet and playwright. The Taming of the Shrew, 1592, Act 2, Scene 1



## **2. A very short personal history**

I was born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina in a family of Spanish immigrants. Spain figured prominently in my father's stories and I grew up fascinated by his far away land and family. My father spoke so lovingly and forlornly about his early life in Spain that I built a fantasy world out of those stories where I would time and again seek refuge from reality. Buenos Aires is a very sophisticated city with a respectable number of well-known fine artists but becoming an artist was not in my radar when, in my teens, I made the decision to select a career. Role models were available and I had knowledge of professions such as medicine and law as well as politics, those professions did not spark my interest and the physicians and lawyers I knew did not leave a strong impression I wanted to emulate, so it was up to my parents to guide me. As early as my primary school year in the 1950's, my parents sought advice on what path to chose for me in high school: business, science or letters. In the culture of the time, it was felt that a young lady should be kept away from men. They heard some advice to the tune of "do not send her to the business path, she will have to work in an office with all the temptations that implies. Guide her towards teaching, that is safer and she will not have to work with men."

Thank God, one of my cousins, a teacher, told my parents that they should disregard that old fashioned advice; "the important thing is the moral education at home, " she said. "She will be safe in any work environment given the type of family you are." As you can see, all that mattered in my world was the kind of job I could get after high school. My parents wanted to make sure that I would be able to support myself. There was no talk of a career after that. Or at least I was not aware of it. So, I graduated high school with a degree in bookkeeping that allowed me to work as an accountant's assistant.

After high school, it was my father who said that it would be a crime not to pursue a university degree. And so I did. The high school path I had pursued also provided the map for my next move. So I became an economist. I did not have a strong vocation for it. I just wanted to have a well paying job. I was very ambitious for a top-notch job in the government or a major corporation. And so eventually I got a job in a large corporation and later in the government.

How I came to study fine art is not so simple to explain. I came to the world of fine arts after a career in economics. I graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts a full 30 + years after obtaining my undergraduate degree in economics. Many people dream of what they will do once they retire but few do anything about it. My vocation took time to manifest itself but once it surfaced it showed a clear path to follow, and events both personal and collective facilitated the decision to move on. I made the decision to study art full time in 2001, this was a very important year in my life both on a personal level and as a witness to the events of September 11. On a personal level, among other events, I inherited my father's family farm and place of birth in northwest Spain, and on the collective level, the trauma of 9/11 lent urgency to the pursuit of my vocation.

### 3. Chronology of work while at VCU

#### 3.1. First Year and Candidacy: Objects and Memory

I produced two major pieces during my first year: Memory Fountain (**Figure 1**), and *Keeper of Secrets* (Figure 2). Both were shown as part of my Candidacy on April 19, 2008.

My family history inspired both works. A one sided inspiration since it was based only on my father's family, and also based on my imagination since I did not meet them until I was in my 20's. My mother's family failed to inspire me, perhaps because I grew up knowing them and I did not find them magical or interesting enough. From now on, when I refer to my family, I am talking about my father's family in Spain.

I was, and continue to be, obsessed with my family and my memories. I inherited the house where my father was born in 1911, the farmland, all the family papers, photographs, clothes, furniture and lots of stuff. Among the items, were a number of very plain and rusted objects that were the source of the Memory Fountain. They were found in the interstices of a wall in the home and I sensed that these objects had witnessed the lives of my family for me and I wanted to make them talk. I assume that they had been in the house for many years, perhaps for hundreds of years. I carried them back to the United States in my luggage. To make them talk, I dripped saline and vinegar over them as they lay on white cotton fabric stretched over containers. I used an intravenous system (IV bags) to deliver the saline, a reference to the life saving and resuscitating power these medical tools have. In time, the dripping of saline over the iron objects produced a rust stain on the fabric. The stained fabric represents a record of a process a sort of daguerreotype that left a memory of my family's presence, a portrait of the ancestors who lived in the house. Each piece of fabric had a resemblance to them or so I imagined. Perhaps they handled these objects or perhaps not but they shared the same space at some point in time, I am certain

**Figure 1. Memory Fountain (2008)**



of that. I embroidered their names on the stained fabric on the basis of this conviction. The Memory Fountain I showed at Candidacy was a second version of the piece. The first version was organized in a formal arrangement where the buckets with the objects were set against the wall rather than in a circle and the portraits were on an adjacent wall. Both versions have their strong points: the first version is more formal while the second version is more organic.

During the spring semester (2008), I studied the family papers to find clues about their lives, dreams, and stories. Stories that we never had a chance to exchange since they all died in the course of twenty-five years after our first meeting, and my visits during those years were short and sporadic. I confirmed facts that I had suspected and discovered others that were a complete surprise. The papers, some of which go back to the XVII century, allowed me to track my lineage back to Pedro Almuiña, my great great great grandfather. I found myself exhausted by the emotional toll that digging into my family's papers caused me. Keeper of Secrets (**Figure 2**) references the furniture that was used on a daily basis by my relatives. I used industrial felt to construct these objects because the softness of the felt speaks of comfort, without commanding space like real furniture, while the flatness of the felt moves the pieces into the realm of the imaginary. The somber color recalls shadows and the void left by their passing. My search for answers about my family also opened a can of worms about the severe alcoholism of one of my ancestors. This and other unpleasant findings led me to the decision to figuratively close the books and move on. In this case, I visibly closed and secured the drawers and the information they held. That is why I placed a cross over the area where the drawers would be if they were real furniture.

**Figure 2. Keeper of Secrets (2008)**



## **3.2. Second Year and Thesis Exhibition**

### **3.2.1. The power of the child**

It is amazing to me how powerful my childhood memories are in my life. Perhaps it is to be expected but I was not aware of their power until I started art school. The memories and dreams stayed on and influenced the adult I became to pursue dreams and to continue with the unbroken family legacy. In 2001, when I received the inheritance, I could have sold the family house and the family's physical connection to the house, that had been unbroken for over three centuries, would have been severed. But I could not do it. Almost against any reasonable person's expectations I continued with my quest. We shall see how it all ends. I just did not want to be the one who broke the link.

The child may have dreamed of living in or owning the house in Spain but could not have known the lengths the adult would have to go to in order to be in a position to restore the house. The long hours of study, the uprooting to the US, the years of stressful work and international globetrotting. But alas, the time came and the adult did exactly what the child had always wanted. I got the house and since it was nothing like what the child had imagined, I had to bring it to the level of the child's imagined memories.

Early during the second year at VCU, I worked in felt and continued to make "felt furniture". I am very comfortable with this material. It can do almost anything I ask of it. But the furniture no longer had the connotation of family heirloom. It was in the realm of magic fueled by a desire to have better looking furniture than what I really owned. The pieces are placed against the wall as if they were real, they take the place of the furniture but do not have many of the attributes of the real version: They cannot hold my stuff; they cannot hide my messy entourage of possessions. They have their virtues: I cannot bump against them and get black and blue marks on my body.

### **3.2.2. The un-married**

Among the papers I gathered from all the trunks in the house, I found a document that stated our family lineage and allowed me to find out the names of my ancestors and their siblings and spouses. The head of the family line according to this document was Pedro Almuiña, who married Dominga Lopez. Unfortunately the document shows no dates of birth, marriage or death so it has not clarified my ancestry completely. I know I can do the research in the village church to fill in the blanks, but that project will have to wait. Until I came across this document (Figure 3), I did not know my ancestors beyond my grandparents. Now at least I know their names and who they married or that they did not marry.

What happens when the cycle stops and a family reaches the end of the line?

In a socially conservative family, the family can prolong itself only through marriage and births. Marriage is one of life's goals and not being married is present in mutterings at family get together; it is sometimes unspoken but always present. The un-married always have to explain themselves, justify themselves and occasionally overcome blatant efforts at unsavory matchmakings.

If offspring do not show the ability to mate, it is felt as a stain on the family. In the Argentine culture I grew up in, as well as the Spanish culture of my parents, the spinsters feel that they have to constantly apologize for not being successful in this realm. The word "spinster" itself has the ring of "spineless."

I make work that looks askance at one of the rituals of this social rite of passage and the trappings associated with marital success: the marriage proposal and all the heirlooms that are happily given up to give the newly married a good start in life. Those objects of pride inspire me to such an extent that I have made a fetish of them. Large breakfronts, wardrobes, and cupboards stand as witnesses of the success of the family in prolonging its contribution to humanity's gene pool.





My family's celibacy and spinsterhood, is quite remarkable. I find it particularly puzzling, from the vantage point of the twenty first century in the US, where people marry and divorce many times during their lives, that seven brothers and sisters did not achieve even one marriage among them.

In thinking about this, I started noticing marriage proposals in movies, soap operas, and sitcoms. This made it all the more mysterious and difficult to explain why my aunts and uncles did not marry. My sister and I both married quite late in life and I have found from the family papers that every generation of my family had a marriage deficit of some measure. Is there a spinsterhood gene?

I started collecting footage of marriage proposals as if to fill the void in my family's lives, and to compensate for that I cobbled together over two minutes of unrelenting marriage proposals as if to fill a void that can never be filled. I continue to collect footage of marriage proposals even after I am done with the video; it is a compulsion I cannot overcome.

I dressed two pieces of found furniture as a bride and groom and embedded the video of proposals that show these simple scenes where the traditional phrases: "will you marry me," "will you do me the honor to be my wife", are repeated again and again. A scene that eluded my aunts and uncles and almost missed my sister and me.

### **3.3. Thesis exhibition: Lighting the shadows**

This work expresses the overwhelming influence of family and tradition and explores the hidden messages we receive from ancestors through their possessions even after they are long gone.

I made three large pieces of furniture to stand as reminders of absence. This absence is not passive or just mournful; this absence wants to be present and remembered in the form of light over shadows.

The work kept changing in character as it grew, manifesting the need for additional size, art materials and processes.

Working with light as an art material to convey the idea of furniture as keeper/reveler of secrets has allowed me to play with its visual language as an expression of the divine, the religious, and our better self. But since where there is light there are also shadows, I used shadows as a metaphor for secrets, our shadow-self<sup>3</sup>, absence, and specters.

The light coming through the gobos (go between, or go before the optics) illuminates the areas that can be accessed, i.e., the doors and the drawers of the real life furniture it represents. Light also alludes to the possibility of discovering secrets long hidden behind those doors and drawers. Not just secrets but also biography and history. But there are also shadows that indicate the lack of accessibility to this knowledge. We can reach into them and take the material objects that belonged to the absent ones but there are limits to the accessibility.

Light and shadows also stand for the limits that I have faced and will continue to face in filling in the blanks of my narrative.

The size of each work too has its own language. I made the work to fit my space at the Anderson Gallery. But in my mind the space kept getting bigger. So, I made each successive work bigger than the previous one in an effort to prevent the space from dwarfing my work. This process got to the point that I could only work, comfortably, on the floor but my back has suffered for it. The size symbolizes my quest to meet any challenge with renewed efforts. I am glad that there was a deadline looming.

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<sup>3</sup> The negative side of the personality – the sum of the unpleasant qualities one wants to hide; the inferior, worthless, and primitive side of human natures. Jung emphasizes that everyone has a shadow; everything substantial has a shadow, the ego is to shadow as light is to shade, and it is the shadow, which makes us human. Psychoanalytic Terms & Concepts, The American Psychoanalytic Association.



**Figure 4. Lighting the shadows**





**Figure 5. Aqui quedaron los secretos de T.A. – Detail of Lighting the shadows**





**Figure 6. Aqui quedaron los secretos de J.M.A. Detail of Lighting the shadows.**





**Figure 7. Aqui quedaron los secretos de J.A. Detail of Lighting the Shadows.**



## **4. Influences and sources of inspiration**

### **3.4. The house and the family**

Once I received the inheritance, as if by magic, my childhood memories about the family farm resurfaced in a way that would not let go.

While I did not meet my father's family until later in my life, and therefore I did not set foot in Spain or in the farm until then, I knew a lot about them from my father's stories and from conversations overheard when we received visitors, a large number of them, who emigrated from Spain. These two sources of information created in my mind this legendary family, who lived in this fabulous house named "Cimadevila". Growing up, this house grew to become a sort of Wuthering-Heights castle. I heard that the family was much better off than any of the surrounding ones, and that they were the well to do of the village. I never questioned why it was that my father left Spain, if he had such a fantastic home and such a fabulous social and economic position, for a not so magical life in Argentina. In Argentina, my father lived with his uncle whose wife was such a witch that he preferred to sleep in the tramways rather than go to their infernal house. She also stole from him. All of this did not occur to me. I guess the memory was much better left unchecked.

There was some truth to the story about my family's position. My family did have a considerable amount of farmland and the house was large and made of stone (Figure 4) But farmers were not doing well in Spain in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, until Franco died, neither did all of Spain. A large number of Spaniards from Galicia immigrated to the Americas as my father did in 1928.



**Figure 8. Aerial photograph of Cimadevila circa 1970**



This house that occupied so much of my childhood's imagination came into my possession in 2001. Life has a way of closing the circle. It started with my father's emigration to Argentina in 1928, followed by my own emigration to the United States and will be closed with my return to my father's birthplace. My father's brothers and sisters, seven of them, never married and had no direct descendants so I inherited the house and all its contents. There was a trove of family papers, puzzling effects and objects that fueled my renewed obsession with my family and the house. The objects that I found inserted into the walls of the house inspired the work I did in my first semester at VCU. The house is not simply a home to me it is much more eloquent, it has many stories to tell, many objects to shed and many layers of meaning to explore.

The history of the house: who owned it, additions and renovations, can only be found in the archives of the Galician province where the house sits. Notary books archived in the provincial archives would yield the information to piece together how the house came to be what it is today, but perhaps more than that. The remainders of these activities may be lost or stored in a precarious way.

What I know so far is that the house is approximately 350 years old. That is, it was built around 1650 when Spain did not yet exist as a country and instead it was a series of kingdoms and alliances. It existed before Goya and was standing during the last century of the inquisition.

The house was built in several stages; this we know because of work we are currently doing that has made it necessary to tear away at later additions. I also know that my ancestors felt the need to defend themselves from intruders. Openings in the outside walls of the house were used to rest weapons and shoot from inside and also to see who was coming from a distance. Much research will be necessary in order to learn about those who lived in the house. The latest family was that of my father. I know how the house was used, whose rooms they were, who owned which furniture, and where all the animals

were housed at night. However, all I can do from my perch in the US is work with the objects that I managed to bring back from my trips (**Figure 9**), and many boxes of family papers.



**Figure 9. Objects from Cimadevila.**



### **3.5. Is there a spinsterhood gene?**

The issue of the lack of marriage in my family became another source of inspiration and obsession. How is it possible that seven siblings would be unable to find love or, barring that, at least a partner at some point in their very long lives?

I have not found the answers yet. I know that my aunts were courted and I found many love letters among their papers. Of course I do not have the other side of the epistolary exchange so I can only guess at the reasons for their lack of success in this area. I also know that my aunts were very interested in marriage: particularly my marriage. They advised me again and again that I should not stay single. This was a very common and urgent topic of conversation during my visits. Unfortunately they did not live to see me follow their advice.

### **3.6. Artists who influenced me**

- 3.6.1. **Magdalena Abakanowicz's** Abakans have exerted strong influence on my work, in particular, the large group of weavings "Black Environment" (1970-1978), Figure 10,

**Figure 10. Black Environment, (1970-1979) Magdalena Abakanowicz**



and “Abakans” (1967-71) Figure 11.

There is much that has to be imagined in the Black Environment work: the work is off the floor, levitating and implying the place of limbs, and there is no hint of a head. It is as if invisible men were wearing them or ghosts in search of a host. They imply a certain foreboding, as they seem to encase or guard any number of possible things.



The monumentality of the works as well as the textile sensibility has been a model to learn from and a source of inspiration. I interpret the Abakans as stand-ins for the human form. Abakanowicz changed the way they were displayed depending on the site; the groupings that she designed for the Abakans seem to be precursors of her later figurative works.

**Figure 11. *Abakans* (1967-1971), Magdalena Abakanowicz**



The blackness of the Abakans that I prefer, have a mood altering effect. There is nothing playful about the color black. Anything and anybody clad in black means to be taken seriously.

In a similar way, I use furniture shapes as stand ins for people. My furniture has legs, sometimes arms, and always a body and pockets. The human reference does not end there. Furniture as well as people are

guardians of secrets and all my life I have used furniture drawers as a source of information denied to me.

Abakanowicz's use of thick and heavy fabrics led me to look for a similar material and that is how I discovered industrial felt.

Another way I recognize Abakanowicz influence on my work is in her use of family ancestry in her early work. M. Brenson notes that her father is a descendant of Abaka-Khan, a great-grandson of Genghis Khan. Abakanowicz used her family name to title her first cycle of works.

### **3.6.2. Ann Hamilton**

Ann Hamilton's use of objects and language has had a significant influence in my work. In describing Ann Hamilton's overall oeuvre Joan Simon remarks on the variety of materials (matter) and the quality of hand-made that characterize her installation work. I am enthralled by her use of fabric as found object as she did in the installation "Indigo", in which she bought second hand work shirts in the color indigo blue. The shirts were in the installation that

Was displayed in South Carolina to commemorate the early life of the region. I admire the thoughtful and comprehensive way in which she takes over a space. In the installations, Hamilton emphasizes not just the visual but also the value of handwork (**Figures 12, 13 and 14**).



**Figure 12. Indigo, 1991. Ann Hamilton**



**Figure 13. Indigo (detail), 1991. Ann Hamilton**



Joan Simon notes Ann Hamilton's debt to Duchamp as follows: "Hamilton's installations echo the qualities and obsessive repetition of materials used by Duchamp in his installations and the experiential exploration required of the viewers who step within the bounds of such environments." Simon p. 2.

I admire the final artwork manifested in the installations but even more so the process by which the artist makes her ideas concrete and tactile as well as the complexity of the implementation of her projects.

The picture of the damp sacks (**Figure 14**), also part of Indigo Blue, brought a pang of recognition about Cimadevila. There was a room in the bottom floor, with the precarious feel of the one pictured below.

**Figure 14. Indigo (Detail),1991. Ann Hamilton**



It was interesting to find out in reading Joan Simon's Inventory of objects that the artist had considered textiles and sculpture when deciding what to study in graduate school and given her interest in space issues, she chose sculpture but added that now she would make the opposite choice: "... more textiles less sculpture."

### **3.6.3. Robert Morris, Joseph Beuys, Joan Livingstone, and Barry Le Va**

The work of Robert Morris showed me the potential for felt to convey formal concerns. His work together with that of Livingstone, Beuys and Barry Le Va showed me a universe of the possibilities embodied in industrial felt.

**Figure 15. Untitled: det.: six felt segments, 1967-1968. Robert Morris**



The work made by these four artists ranges from clothes used in performance work (Beuys) to pure abstraction (Morris, Livingstone, Le Va), and that is a good source of inspiration and encouragement.



**Figure 16. Four Consecutive Installations and Drawings 1967 -1978,  
Second Installation. Barry Le Va**



**Figure 17. Suit of Clothes, 1970. Joseph Beuys**



Beuys interests me; in particular, because of the way he mythologized felt in his fictitious autobiography; fictitious according to Art since 1900. In his writings Beuys claimed that his use of fat and felt represented the actual fact that those who rescued him when his Luftwaffe plane was downed in

the former Soviet Union, during World War II, used the two materials. This use of felt as stand-in for an event inspired me to use it for my work because it has a versatility and resonance that I can use as a language of my own.

**Figure 18. Joan Livingstone. From “Joan Livingstone” by Telos**



#### **4. Technical Exploration and Material Usage**

I use materials and processes for their expressive and conceptual content. A material's artistic history is also important and I research it to understand its nature and origins.

##### **4.1. Stained fabric**

The objects I used in Memory Fountain (**Figure 1**) were in the house in Spain. They are all made of iron, a material that produces rust when subjected to the elements, specifically, water and air. I dripped the saline from IV bags and vinegar over the objects and as this rusted the objects the rust transferred to the fabric by the dripping of the IV bags and vinegar. After doing this process for several days and ensuring that there was a substantial amount of information, I stopped the rusting process. I view the rust that tinged the fabric as portraits of my family. I assigned the pieces of stained fabric to each member of my family, who lived in the house, and embroidered their names. I had no scientific basis for the process of assignation I just followed an intuitive process based on my memories of them.

##### **4.2. Industrial felt**

I have heard many times that Joseph Beuys owns felt. I assume this means that I should not try to use it myself or, more kindly, that I should be aware that he used it before me. In fact, Beuys no more owns felt than do Robert Morris, Joan Livingstone, or Barry Le Va. All I can do about a material's history is to know that it has one but that is as far as it goes. I will not be deterred by someone else's use. I will make the material mine.

Felt has a spotty history: it is claimed to be the first fabric of man and as such it was initially only available to the more affluent, but with the development of other textiles it fell out of favor and was



relegated to secondary uses and became available to the masses. According to L. Olschki in The Myth of Felt, the first literary mention of felt appeared in Dante's Divine Comedy:

*He shall not feed on either earth or pelf,  
But upon wisdom, and on love and virtue.  
Twixt Feltro and Feltro shall his nation be.*

*Inferno, I, 103-105*

Olschki notes that scholars have been trying to decipher the meaning of this phrase for generations and that Boccaccio also repeated the story but without clearly subscribing to it. In Dante's times Feltro was translated as felt and between two felts referred to the birth and death of the monarch and to the use of felt at both ends of life.

I used industrial felt for the furniture pieces and I embroidered the felt to represent the drawers and other markings in the furniture. This industrial felt is 1 inch thick and 72 inches wide and it is needle felted.

The processing is done by companies that specialize in the recycling of the component materials, such as wool and other fibers.

Industrial felt of this kind requires a special tool for cutting. I use an electric fabric cutter that is good for making straight cuts. It is not great for cutting curves or complex designs and the noise it makes when I try let me know when I have exceeded its capabilities. I am still looking for that perfect tool that will cut the most intricate designs of this unwieldy material without complaints.

I use hand embroidery to add definition to the work and to embellish the felt furniture but always with the aim of keeping them somber and poignant.

Industrial felt by its very rough, lack of preciousness and no nonsense nature, seemed ideal for the representation of furniture in a farm house full of no-nonsense farmers whose roughened skin in face and hands spoke to me of ancient history, rituals, and stories.

#### **4.3. Intravenous Saline Dispensers (IV bags)**

I used IV bags from a medical supplier. The contents of the bags were past their due date so they were not available for medical use but were perfect for my purpose. Although, I thought of using other elements instead of the IV bags, such as faucets and dripping water if the gallery had had water sources I could have tapped into.

#### **4.4. Found objects**

I rummage through thrift stores and alleys for discarded furniture. The furniture and other objects serve as stand ins for those that are across the Atlantic. The furniture I chose in those places had to be of a certain quality; perhaps some defined style, and have the patina of time stamped on it.

#### **4.5. Found footage**

People who do not get married intrigue me. It seems to run in families. The video “Will you marry me?” assembles twenty marriage proposals I witnessed on TV and it runs for 2 ½ minutes. I have just as many collected proposals still unused.

It seemed that it was so easy to get a proposal. Almost every soap opera or sitcom provides examples during the broadcast year. Soap operas reflect society’s mores and aspirations. Erika Kane of the soap All my Children (ABC, 1 pm to 2 pm, daily) has been married nine times and twice to the same men. I guess there is a limited number of marriages available and like so many candies in a pound and if someone takes nine, eight others will have to do without.

So why is it that some people do not get a proposal or do not accept any proposal offered. From the found footage I made a video that fetishizes the marriage proposal. In repeating the “Would you marry me?” “Let’s get married” or a variation on the question or affirmation, and through humor, I gave life to my obsession with the subject. The video can be viewed on YouTube at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWSS6pxzTeo>

#### **4.6. Embroidery**

The stitches used were: couching, whipped backstitch, backstitch, and chain stitch and variations.

#### **4.7. Lighting**

Lighting had as much a role as the physical work. I used gobos (go between or go before the optics) as templates to project the images of the original furniture. The lighting fixtures were ellipsoidals, which can be used for projection because they focus light sharply. A gobo is a template or pattern cut into a circular plate used to create patterns of projected light, essentially a stencil made of metal.

## **5. Conclusion**

The child that propelled me for so many years can finally rest, assured that her job is done. Although there may be territories still to discover in the recesses of my mind I am entranced by the realization that my work has achieved a degree of unity between the idea and the object that was my goal all along. Of course I do not have all the answers, but the most enduring and beneficial result of graduate school may be that now I know how and where to search for the answers. It should be a very interesting journey.

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Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Citizen of Argentina and Spain and permanent resident of the United States.

### ***Education***

- 2007-2009     MFA Program, Department of Craft and Material Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Richmond, VA
- 2006-2007     MFA program in Studio Art University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland
- 2005           Post Baccalaureate in Sculpture, VCU, Richmond, VA
- 2002-2005     BFA Fine Arts (with Honors), Corcoran College of Art and Design, Washington, DC
- 1972-1975     MA Economics, The American University, Washington, DC
- 1971           Development banking studies, The American University, Washington, DC
- 1964-1969     BA Economics, Catholic University, Buenos Aires, Argentina

### ***Work Experience***

- 2006-2007     Graduate Assistant, Art Department, University of Maryland. Provided teaching support to the professors of Design I, Drawing I (Fall 2006), Design I and Metal Sculpture (Spring 2007)
- 2005           Studio Technician, Foundations Department, Corcoran College of Art and Design
- 1999-2002     Senior Economist, The International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC
- 1986-1999     Economist, The International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC
- 1972-1986     Statistical Clerk to Editorial Officer, The International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC
- 1970-1971     Economist, Fiat Argentina
- 1971           Economist, Water Resources Secretariat, Argentine Government

### ***Honors, Scholarships, Fellowships***

- President's Award 2002-2005, Corcoran College of Art and Design
- International Monetary Fund, Individual Study Program for Master of Arts in Economics, 1972-1975
- Interamerican Development Bank Fellowship for Development Banking studies at The American University in Washington, DC, 1971-1972
- Catholic University Scholarship, for Freshman through Junior Undergraduate years 1965-1967

### ***Exhibitions***

- 2009 Lighting the shadows, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA
- 2009 New Waves 2009, Contemporary Art Center of Virginia, Virginia Beach, VA
- 2008 Group Exhibition, Federal Bank Building, Richmond, VA
- 2007 Domestic Disruption, Group Exhibition, Fine Arts Building (FAB) Gallery, Richmond, VA
- 2005 BFA Exhibition, Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington, DC
- 2005 Group Exhibition, Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington, DC
- 2005 Five and a Half Large, Group Exhibition, FAB Gallery, VCU, Richmond, VA
- 2004 Triad, Group Exhibition, Area 405, Baltimore, Maryland